

VZCZCXRO1048  
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV  
DE RUEHDM #0364 1431457  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 221457Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5005  
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0006  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0408

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000364

SIPDIS

NEA/ELA, WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2018

TAGS: ETRD ETTC PREL CU SY

SUBJECT: SYRIA-CUBA: TITLE III OF THE LIBERTAD ACT, MAY 2008

REF: A. STATE 52541

1B. 07 DAMASCUS 0483

Classified By: CDA Michael H. Corbin for reasons 1.4 b and d

11. (U) In response to ref A: The SARG has taken no actions to promote the advancement of democracy or human rights in Cuba and as a matter of foreign policy has expressed a support for Cuban policies.

12. (U) The SARG has made no public statements or undertaken other governmental actions to support civil society in Cuba. The SARG has taken no action through its diplomatic mission or other fora to support democracy after the undemocratic succession from Fidel to Raul Castro.

13. (U) There was one high-level diplomatic visit between Cuba and the host country in the past six months. On March 29, Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations, Filipe Peres Roki, addressed the Arab League Summit in Damascus on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. There were also high-level diplomatic visits during the past year. On June 5, 2007 Felix Castro Jr., Scientific Adviser to the State Council Presidency and son of the then Cuban leader Fidel Castro, visited Syria and met with Syrian Information Minister Mohsen Bilal. We suspect there are other low level Cuban-Syrian contacts given Syrian and Cuban foreign policy positions.

14. (U) There are no known private or public Syrian business investments in Cuba.

15. (U) Syria signed a pro forma "trade agreement" with Cuba in 1998, ratified in 2000. According to the Director of International Relations at the Syrian Ministry of Economy and Trade, the agreement is the type of agreement that Syria signs with all "friend" countries. The agreement gives no reduced customs or other preferential access to either market (ref B). In addition, there were a number of public statements in the recent past that touched on the topic of improved trade relations between the two countries. For instance, on April 4, 2007 Cuban Minister of Investment and Economic Cooperation, Marta Louis Morales stated that, "The forthcoming period will witness more progress in holding more cooperation between the two countries."

16. (U) With regard to exchange programs, Cuba provides scholarships to post-graduate Syrian students in Spanish under the umbrella of the Joint Syrian-Cuban Committee.

CORBIN